

# FAQ

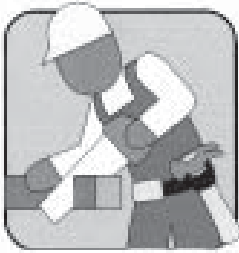
# PERMITS

## Who, What, Where & When?

*Answers to frequently asked questions about the permitting process in the City of Harrisburg.*

The Permitting process is necessary to insure that all commercial and residential work that is done in Harrisburg is safe and appropriate. Harrisburg's historic districts, zoning, floodplain, code and fire ordinances, and mercantile regulations all have an impact on the use of and changes made to City structures. While property owners are responsible under law for obtaining permits, the task usually falls to the contractor by agreement with the client.

### Building Permits



Harrisburg City residents and contractors doing work within the City limits are reminded that construction and renovation activities costing \$1,000 or more, or that involve structural elements, require an official Building/Zoning Permit issued by the City of Harrisburg Codes Bureau. Any fence erected within the City limits requires a building permit regardless of cost or location or who is doing the work. All electrical and plumbing work require permits and can only be performed by professionals licensed by the City of Harrisburg.

### Zoning Permits

Zoning law determines what uses are allowed, disallowed, or conditionally allowed within certain districts of the City. Zoning also determines the size and placement of structures on lots, and sets parking, landscaping and signage requirements. Some uses and waivers to requirements may require special review processes noted in the Zoning Code. New commercial construction or multi-residential development also require land development review by the Planning Commission and City Council prior to Building/Zoning permit issuance.

### Historic District Building Permits

Harrisburg has seven municipal historic districts. Any exterior changes or renovations, other than paint, made to structures requires approval of the plans from the Harrisburg Architectural Review Board (HARB) prior to beginning work. The homeowner, architect and/or builder must submit plans to the board and appear at a public meeting to discuss the proposed changes/renovations.



*A property at on North 6th Street during restoration. Projects like this may require a variety of permits and inspections. Codes and Planning Bureaus' friendly and courteous staff are available to walk contractors and property owners through the permitting process.*

The findings of the HARB will impact on the issuance of a building permit for the work proposed.

In-kind replacement/repair may be approved by Planning Bureau staff. Contractors should also be aware that staff review for Architectural Conservation Overlay District guidelines is also required within the Summit Terrace neighborhood.

### Fire Prevention Permits

Fire regulations should always be reviewed before any major building changes are contemplated. Fire Prevention Permit regulations vary depending upon the use of a structure. Public assembly, types of materials stored or used in a business, or services provided may require inspections or special permitting. It is possible that the installation of specific equipment like range hoods or sprinklers may be required.





## Health License

Certain changes or additions to structures or businesses may require approval by the City Health Officer. Any establishment that will provide, sell or dispose of food in the City is required to have a Health License. This includes the installation of specific types of commercial grade equipment or other safety considerations. Contractors should check with the Health Officer before finalizing building or renovation plans for clients that have or plan to start businesses dealing with the production or storage of foodstuffs. Packets of information that will guide potential business owners through the process are available from the Bureau of Codes. Due to the change of many laws regarding food service, it is recommended that the Health Officer be consulted prior to the start of any project, whether new or existing. For more information contact the Codes Bureau at 255-6553.



## Mercantile License

Any business operating in the City of Harrisburg is required to obtain a mercantile license and be current on the payment of mercantile taxes. This includes contractors based in Harrisburg or working on any property located within City limits. If a business owner does not have a Mercantile License, or is not current on his or her taxes, the Codes Bureau may be prevented from issuing a Building Permit for work a contractor is hired to perform. For more information on Mercantile licenses call the Tax and Enforcement Office at 255-6513.

## Temporary and Emergency Permits

The permitting process is often drawn out because of the time it takes to process the internal paperwork for each permit issued. Emergency situations usually require fast action on the part of contractors, carpenters, plumbers, electricians and roofing professionals. In order to streamline the permitting process and better serve the public the Codes Bureau issues Emergency and Temporary Permits to speed work on those projects that qualify.

Contractors who have a pressing need to begin work before a standard permit can be issued, have obtained all the appropriate clearances and provided all required information in a timely manner, may be issued an Emergency or a Temporary Permit, enabling them to begin



*The Plans and Permits Unit reviews major construction and development projects during the planning stages. This review assists the permitting process and helps avoid delays during implementation.*

work immediately. These Permits will remain in effect for the period of time it takes to issue a standard permit (no longer than 15 days). Emergency and Temporary Permits are intended for special situations and will be issued at the discretion of the Bureau.

## Plans and Permits Unit

Acquiring permits for major undertakings or new commercial construction is often more complicated. Large projects can be reviewed at a special Plans and Permits Unit meeting. Here representatives from the Planning, Codes, Engineering, Fire and Police bureaus are able to explore and discuss all the construction details regarding permitting issues at the same time.

## Permit Suspension or Revocation

Contractors are reminded that by Executive Order of the Mayor, any City-issued permit or license may be suspended or revoked at any time if it is determined that the holder of the permit or license secured same by misrepresentation; failed to maintain qualifications required by federal, state or local laws; engaged in fraudulent behavior or misleading advertising; consented to or allowed any behavior which would constitute a crime under federal, state or local laws, including but not limited to drug trafficking or drug possession; committed an act of gross negligence, or allowed any manner or form of public nuisance.

For more information on the permitting process in the City of Harrisburg please contact:

**Codes Bureau - 255-6552**

**Planning Bureau - 255-6480**

Check on-line for forms on the City website:

**[www.HarrisburgPA.org](http://www.HarrisburgPA.org)**